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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 000133

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STATE FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL/PHD AND INR/AA

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SUBJECT: AN INAUSPICIOUS START FOR THE 2007 ELECTIONS

REF: A. 05 DAKAR 3184

[1](#)B. 05 DAKAR 2597

Classified By: POLOFF RACHEL WALLACE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) Every party involved with the 2007 legislative and presidential elections faces serious obstacles. President Wade is so concerned with ensuring a solid win that he is exploring ways to change Senegal,s electoral system and has approached former Prime Minister Seck,s camp, looking for a way to bring Seck back into the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) fold. Wade has also attempted to split the opposition by luring some of its leaders into his Government. The Autonomous National Electoral Commission (CENA), which has responsibility as the government &watchdog8 for the electoral process, has not been given promised funds to conduct its mission and thus is unable to move forward. END SUMMARY.

WADE,S QUEST FOR VICTORY

[1](#)2. (C) Although more than one year away, the February 2007 legislative and presidential elections are already posing problems for everyone involved. Polls conducted by Wade,s own party reportedly show him losing. Wade has looked to a multitude of means to achieve a solid win. First, he introduced in the National Assembly a bill extending parliamentary terms, thereby coupling the legislative and presidential elections.

[1](#)3. (C) Next, some legal experts claim Wade has imported from France three constitutional law specialists to advise him on how to alter Senegal,s electoral system and guarantee an election victory. Serigne Mbaye Thiam, a leading member of the Socialist Party (PS) and Professor Babacar Gueye, NGO &Forum Civil8 coordinator for electoral issues, indicated separately that Wade wants to change the electoral law to remove a barrier that could compromise his reelection. Currently, the electoral system, &Le Quart Bloquant,8 requires every each candidate to receive the votes of at least 25 percent of the total number of registered voters in addition to an absolute majority of votes actually cast to be elected. If not, a second round is held 15 days after the results are announced. Wade may try every tactic possible to avoid going to a second round. For this reason, he is considering a &first past the post8 (or plurality voting) system. In such a system, whoever receives the largest number of votes wins; there would be no run-off and no minimum number of votes required.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Finally, apparently fearing electoral backlash from the Seck indictment, Wade has opened discussions with those closest to Seck to achieve a rapprochement. EmbOff was told by a Seck confidant that Seck is open to returning to the

PDS, if permitted to run the party. This could dramatically affect the elections. The jailing of Seck has impassioned many in the opposition and throughout the electorate. Were he to be released, this opposition catalyst would disappear. Moreover, Seck is widely viewed as an effective party manager. He could reunify the currently fragmented PDS in its bid for legislative and presidential victory in ,07.

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

15. (C) Wade is also rumored to be attempting to co-opt opposition leaders such as Moustapha Niasse, leader of the Alliance of Forces of Progress (AFP). Wade reportedly offered to Niasse and others the possibility of teaming up with him on the electoral ticket. To open up additional positions to opposition leaders, Wade is also considering pushing for a change in the Constitution to permit creation of a Vice Presidency and/or a revived Senate. At the same time, he has encouraged some old guard members of the PS, the main opposition party, to dissent and create a &Courant de Pensee,8 a faction within the PS intent on challenging its current Secretary General, Ousmane Tanor Dieng. This faction presumably wants to present a candidate for the presidential election and negotiate with Wade for ministerial positions and other privileges. Atomization of the opposition favors Wade even more if a &first past the post8 electoral system is put in place.

A CENA LACKING IN RESOURCES BUT NOT DETERMINATION

16. (C) The PS,s Thiam and Awa Wade, spokesperson of the Ligue Democratique (LD), told us of technical difficulties with the voter registration process. They said photos for voter identification cards often print out black (that is, without an image). Also, under the law as it stands, voters

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are required to register where they vote. The Wade Government has said this is no longer necessary, as there is a computer system in place linking all voting locations. People can register wherever they wish but still have to indicate where they plan to vote. Yet, the Government has made no attempt to change the electoral code to reflect changing realities.

17. (C) Thiam and the LD,s Wade also pointed out that CENA has been given no computers and argue that the government,s claim that it is no longer necessary to vote where one registers is thus unsupported. In fact, the CENA cannot supervise the voter registration process at all without computers. Professor Gueye of the Forum Civil underscored the magnitude of the problem by arguing that CENA not only has no computers, it also has no functional offices, no vehicles for transportation and no significant resources of any kind. The CENA,s national members have resorted to meeting in the house of CENA,s presiding officer. Because the CENA has no computers, hard copies of the names of registered voters have piled up, waiting to be processed. Currently, over one million voters, names sit in stacks, awaiting data entry.

18. (C) According to Gueye, this is GOS strategy. The Government has kept the CENA in a state of indigence in an effort to get its members to resign. The CENA was granted a modest budget of 800,000 CFA francs (approximately USD 1.5 million), which has yet to be disbursed. Yet CENA members have not quit their posts. Instead, they have used media to denounce lack of means and have fought hard to preserve independence. Gueye believes their determination has greatly surprised the Government.

19. (SBU) Cheikh Gueye, Director General of Elections for Senegal, reiterated that the CENA has no resources. He told EmbOff the money and needed equipment are there but have not yet been released by the Government. On the other hand, he said there were no major problems with the upcoming

elections. As of December 29, 1,339,569 people have registered with the new digital registration system)- the vast majority of whom come from Dakar because registration in the 11 regions began later. He also claimed there were 700 electoral committees (including 200 itinerant ones) already in place to manage registration throughout the country. He said the presidential and legislative elections in February/March 2007, and local elections to follow in May 2007, will cost approximately 7 billion CFAF (USD 14 million). The GOS has already invested 20 billion CFAF (USD 40 million) to buy needed equipment.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) Wade is using all means possible to retain his office. He is tinkering with the Constitution and trying to persuade opponents to join him. His maneuvers have not gone unnoticed. Some decry what they describe as a regression of democratic principles in Senegal. They argue that should undemocratic practices continue, there is a potential for political unrest and an inability to govern the country peacefully following the 2007 elections. END COMMENT.

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